

The Road Observer

The Newsletter of the North Down
Advanced Motorists Group



October 2024





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The Newsletter of the North Down Advanced Motorists Group (Group 8199)

Helping to Improve the Standard of Driving on the Roads in Northern Ireland and the advancement of road safety

October 2024

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New Members

This month we welcome car member, Elizabeth Barron. We hope you not only gain from being members of our Group but will also enjoy the friendship and camaraderie of our get-togethers.

Test Passes

No test passes to report this month

Good luck and safe driving or riding to any Associates approaching their test.

September Cover Picture

This the Square in Ballyclare on a quiet Sunday morning. Congratulations (in order of receipt) to Ivan McStea (Belfast Group), David McFall, James O'Brien, David Harcourt and William McAteer. Also an apology to David Harcourt for omitting his name from the list of correct responses in the September issue. Must do better.

This month's picture is a bit further afield. Do you know where it was taken? There is now a prize to aim for as well as the satisfaction of good observation and, of course, getting a mention in the next Road Observer. The prize is a year's Group membership to the Member who gets the greatest number of correct answers in the next 12 months. Submit your answers to: leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com

Dates for your diary

In addition to the regular STAC nights for car Associates and the regular bike runs (notified by email to bike members and also on Facebook) we plan a varied programme for the Group Nights. All meetings will take place in the Boathouse at Groomsport Harbour car park unless otherwise stated

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 29 October | STAC 4 - Junctions and roundabouts |
| 5 November | STAC 5 - Overtaking |
| 12 November | Group Night - RNLI lifeboat visit - 7.45 at the RNLI lifeboat Station in Bangor |
| 26 November | STAC 6 - Motorways and dual carriageways |
| 3 December | STAC 7 - Manoeuvring |
| 10 December | Group Night - Christmas dinner |

STAC - Short Term Associate Course. Associate Members should ensure that you are familiar with the relevant section of the "Associate Handbook" before each STAC night so that you can get the most benefit from the theory session as well as your observed drive.

Annual General Meeting

We had a good turnout for the 2024 AGM to the extent that we almost ran out of cups for tea and coffee. Chairman David Harcourt was on holiday in Japan so your humble editor undertook the task of conducting the AGM.



Tina Lannin presented David's Chairman's report detailing the Group activities throughout the last year and noting that Members achieved a total of 11 passes, of which 7 were car passes and 4 motorcycle.

Campbell English presented the Treasurer's report which showed the Group had a healthy balance, even after the purchase of a new laptop for presentations.

Lisa Thompson presented the membership report which shows that we have 56 full Members (ie those who have passed the advanced test), 18 Associate Members and a further 13 on the books who have not renewed and will be the subject of a follow-up. Lisa is standing down from the Committee and she was thanked for her work as Membership Secretary.

The Committee for the coming year was elected and membership is as follows:

| | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Chair: Tina Lannin | Secretary: Stephen Patterson |
| Treasurer: Campbell English | |
| Committee Members: Leslie Ashe, Ivan Greenfield, David Harcourt, Colin Hay, Ralph Magee, | |

Awards

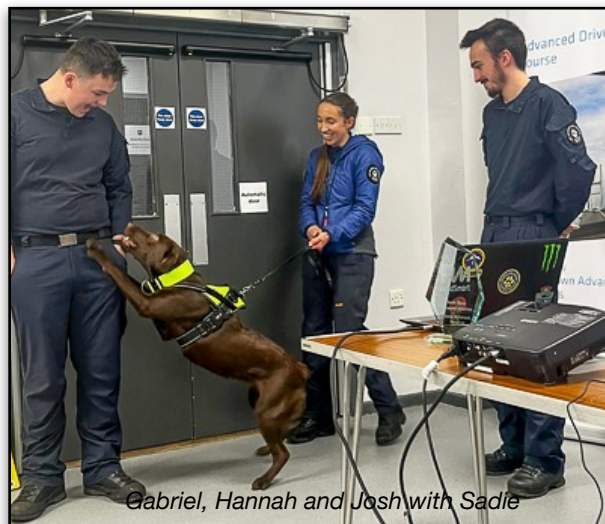
The awards this year were presented by long-time Member Alistair Gillespie. The Mervyn Bates 3 Jags award for Member of the Year went to David Harcourt and in light of David's absence it was accepted by his daughter Becky. The Motorcycle Award went to Ralph Magee and the Annie McFarland Memorial Award went to Leslie Ashe. Alistair spoke very warmly about Annie and her relationship and role in the Group as a committee member, Observer and willing to take on anything. As the recipient of the award I can endorse his remarks as I was particularly fond of Annie and we regularly traded friendly banter. She gave as good as she got.



October Group Night

After the formal proceeding of the AGM we had a talk by Gabriel Walker, Hannah Culbert and Josh Beatty on the work of K9 Search and Rescue NI (we'll call it simply K9 for this report). However, the star of the evening was Sadie a young and very energetic chocolate Labrador.

Gabriel explained that K9 is a purely volunteer organisation and receives no government funding. Their role is to look for missing persons which could be missing hikers, people who are intentionally missing and can include persons with dementia. The organisation consists of 24 dog handlers, 8 swift water recce technicians, 2 search managers and importantly 16 specially trained dogs. Searches can take place in very poor weather, at night, from boats, from helicopters, in collapsed structures and include searching for deceased persons by cadaver dogs. One dog can do the work of 40 searchers on foot.



Gabriel, Hannah and Josh with Sadie

Dog teams are trained in air-scent (locating any human in a specific area) live-find and Victim recovery (body recovery). The length of time a scent remains depends on whether the weather is warm or cold or whether there is a wind. However a scent can last a good few hours. Trail dogs will follow a scent. Cadaver dogs can detect the body of a deceased person underwater.

All handlers are volunteers who provide their own dogs and train several times a month. All handlers are volunteers. They pay all related expenses for feeding, veterinary care, travel, and purchase of needed equipment.

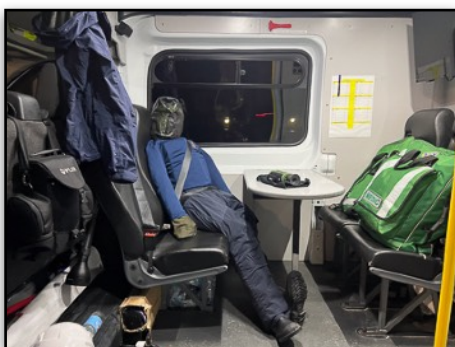


Each team is required to pass a national certification prior to participating in search missions. It takes a year to train a dog at a cost of £8k and before being recognised as qualified they have to be assessed by an assessor from Wales.

They work in close co-operation with the police, the fire service and the coastguard. But they have to clear it with those authorities before getting involved.

Recent major operations they were involved in were the filling station explosion at Creeslough in Donegal and the major earthquake in Turkey. The latter involved 2 teams for 14 days working 12 hours in rotation. When abroad the teams are fully supported by themselves.

Having finished their presentation Sadie was brought in from their Search and Rescue vehicle. What an impression Sadie made. Definitely the main attraction of the evening. Once the special K9 Search and Rescue harness is put on Sadie knows there is work to do and came in as a bundle of energy.



The team answered a number of questions from members before we broke up to visit their vehicle and to interact with Sadie.

It was a fascinating evening and we are very grateful for their time to speak with us. We have an offer to have them back in the lighter evenings when we can see a search dog in action.

The star of the show:



Sadie

Tyre safety Month

In the August issue we carried an article about checking your tyres for cracks. October is tyre safety month and there is a focus on under-inflated tyres. Under inflated tyres reduce your vehicles ability to grip the road and will compromise handling. Have a look at the video in the link below.

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/574806101780975>

Remember to do regular checks on your tyres -

Tyre pressures - don't forget to adjust them depending on the load you are carrying. The correct pressures for various loads will be shown on a sticker on your car - sometimes on the lower part of the driver's door, on the "B" pillar or inside the filler flap.

The condition of the tyres - look for cracks, bulges, sharp objects etc

Do you have the minimum tread depth of 1.6mm? Realistically, going into winter you don't want to be getting close to 1.6mm.

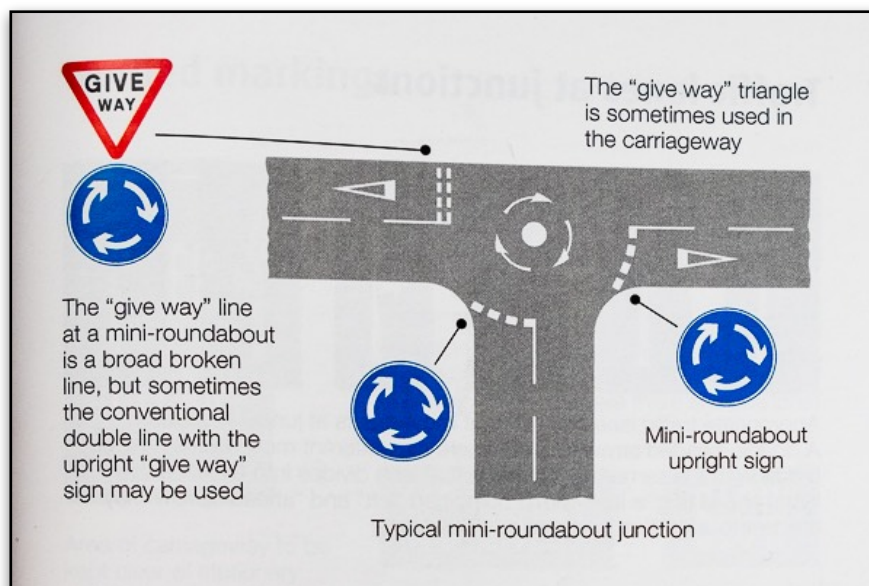


The deeper the tread the more water the tyre can disperse and the greater your grip on the road. Look for the tread-wear indicators on your tyres (see picture) - if they are flush with the tread the tyres need replacing.

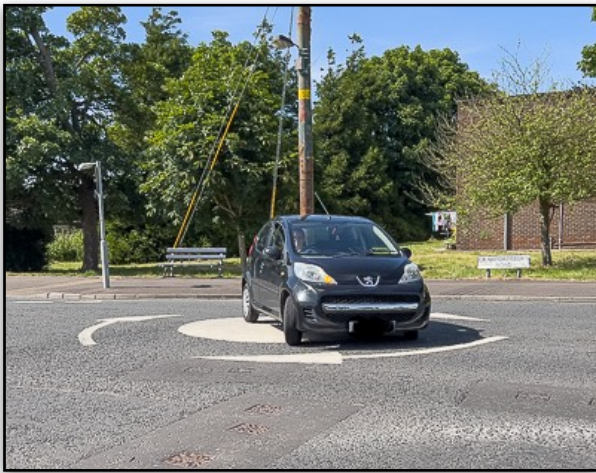
Alternatively use a tyre tread depth gauge but if you haven't got one or a 20p coin. The outer band of the coin measures 1.6mm and if you place the coin between the tyre grooves and you can see the outer band then you are at or below the legal limit and your tyres need changing.

Road Markings

Do you know the different road markings at a mini-roundabout? Here is an extract from "Know Your Traffic Signs".



You should keep to the left of the white circle unless the size of your vehicle or the junction layout makes driving over it unavoidable.



What information is being given in pictures 1 and 2 below?
Let me know your thoughts: leslie.ashe.LA@googlemail.com



And finally..... What's a box junction for? The traffic had been stationary for some time and didn't move until long after I had crossed the road (on foot).



The views expressed in the "Road Observer" are not necessarily those of the Editor, the North Down Advanced Motorists Group or IAM RoadSmart